



108

Greatest Of All Times

*GLOBALLY SELECTED
PERSONALITIES*

ISBN:978-81-982954-6-0

Compiled by:
Prof Dr S Ramalingam

23 Dec 1933 <::><::><::> 91 Years



Na Subbureddiar 100 Educational Trust

[An ISO 9001 - 2015 Certified]

AD-13, 5th Street, Anna Nagar West, Chennai - 600 040

www.nasubbureddiar100.in

23 Nov 1933



91 years

Akihito

A Forceful Defender of Peace

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/04/akihito-forceful-defender-peace>



Japan's Emperor Akihito is the country's first monarch in more than 200 years to abdicate, bringing an end to its Heisei era.

Akihito's decision to abdicate represents a sharp break from royal tradition for the world's oldest monarchy.

The last official abdication took place in 1817, and so when Akihito announced in 2016 his desire to step down due to old age and ill-health, immediate reaction in Japan was mixed.

For many of Japan's conservative politicians, for whom Japan's national identity is tied closely to the notion of an unbroken monarchical line stretching back to the 7th Century BC, abdication was seen as an anomaly, conflicting with the notion that the monarch should serve out his term for the length of his natural life.

Japan's public has been more sympathetic, arguably focusing more on the man than the institution and recognizing the human dimension behind Akihito's decision to step down.

The affection the Japanese public feels for the current emperor is also a response to his role as a forceful defender of the culture of peace that has dominated Japan for the post-1945 period.

Together with his wife, the Empress Michiko, the first commoner to join the royal family, and whom he married in 1959, Akihito has made a point of visiting the sites of conflict from the wartime period both at home and abroad to pay respect for fallen combatants, both foreign and domestic.

Japan's monarchy, like royal families the world over, embodies notions of cultural tradition and national heritage.

It is a trend that is underlined in Japan by the country's indigenous Shinto rituals and the deeply conservative character of the Imperial Household Agency, the bureaucratic institution that closely regulates the etiquette

and rules influencing the emperor's interaction with the general public.

Akihito is also emblematic of the country's post-war modernity.

While his father, Hirohito, had been forced to renounce his divine status following the country's defeat in 1945, Akihito was the first emperor to have an unambiguously non-divine status, serving purely as a symbol of the state and never having any political authority, a sharp contrast with the status of the pre-war emperor.

Naruhito, his son, is likely to mark a continuation of the blend of tradition and modernity that his father's reign epitomized.

Educated both in Japan and in the UK, where he did graduate work in history at Oxford, Naruhito is a keen mountain climber and viola player, and has an interest in water policy and water conservation.

His wife Masako, who will assume the role of empress, is a former fast-track foreign ministry official who gave up her diplomatic career to marry.

Having suffered from stress-related illness for some 15 years, her ability to assume the public duties of her new role is open to question, but the soon to be emperor is a staunch defender of his wife's well-being and is likely to remain protective of her privacy.

The transition from Akihito's era of Heisei (meaning 'realizing peace') to the new era of Reiwa (meaning 'auspicious' or 'beautiful', 'harmony' or 'peace') that will start with Naruhito becoming emperor has been carefully planned for by the Liberal Democratic Party government of Prime Minister Abe.

The government will be hoping that the positive associations conveyed by the new-era name will promote a mood of stability and forward-looking collective optimism - one that the character and demeanour of the new emperor is likely to reinforce.

(😊)@@(😊)

The life and legacy of **Japan's Akihito**

<https://www.dw.com/en/japans-emperor-kihito-his-life-and-legacy/a-48119012>



As a new imperial era begins in Japan, Emperor Akihito has left behind a legacy of modernity and compassion. During his 30-year reign, he defied monarchical norms, drawing both criticism and praise.

The reign of Japan's Emperor Akihito officially ended on Tuesday, and many Japanese are looking back at his "Heisei" era, which was marked by economic and political turbulence.

Japan's economic boom slowed down during this time, with the country dropping behind China as the world's second-largest economy while accruing an unprecedented national debt. The Heisei era also saw 17 prime ministers, with only four lasting more

than two years. Many Japanese refer to the era as the "lost decades."

However, Emperor Akihito and his wife Michiko provided a source of consistency and reliability for Japanese society during these uncertain times. They consoled victims of natural disasters, provided a humanitarian example, and became a symbol of Japan's moral conscience by retaining the memory of World War II.

Redefining Japan's monarchy

When Akihito ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne in 1989, Japan's imperial dynasty was in a crisis. After Japan's defeat in World War II, the Japanese emperor was no longer considered a divine, god-like figure. Akihito's father, Emperor Hirohito, attempted to bring the throne closer to the Japanese people after the war, but Japan's traditional reverence for the emperor was still too large a gap to cross.

Looking for change, Hirohito tried to emulate the constitutional monarchy in Great Britain. He selected the American children's book author Elizabeth Gray-Vining to be his son's private tutor, and hoped to raise a new kind of emperor. Gray-Vining was able to instill foreign ideals in Akihito along with a European understanding of monarchy.

Akihito would end up marrying a middle-class woman named Michiko. They raised their children in their own home and sent them to study at Oxford University in Great Britain.



Akihito and Michiko's wedding photo in 1969.

An emperor for the people

After he became emperor, Akihito wanted to change Japan's imperial institution, which is known as "Tenno." After he took the throne, he said he would always consider the happiness of the Japanese people and make sure the emperorship was suited to modern Japan.

Together with his wife, Akihito prioritized his relationship with the Japanese people and made frequent public appearances. After a volcanic eruption in 1991, Akihito and Michiko went to the disaster area in ordinary clothes and consoled the victims. Japanese conservatives were shocked by the action, but the media, and the Japanese people, loved it.

The couple redefined the role of the imperial family. They met with victims of tragedy and visited people in retirement homes and handicapped care centers. They found a warm-hearted reception everywhere they went and Akihito became a symbol of Japan's national integration.

"In the Heisei era, this new style was well received as social inequality grew and many people fell into depression and lost perspective on life," said Hideya Kawanishi, an expert at Nagoya University on Japan's monarchy.



**Akihito expressed words of regret at the 70th anniversary
of the end of World War II**

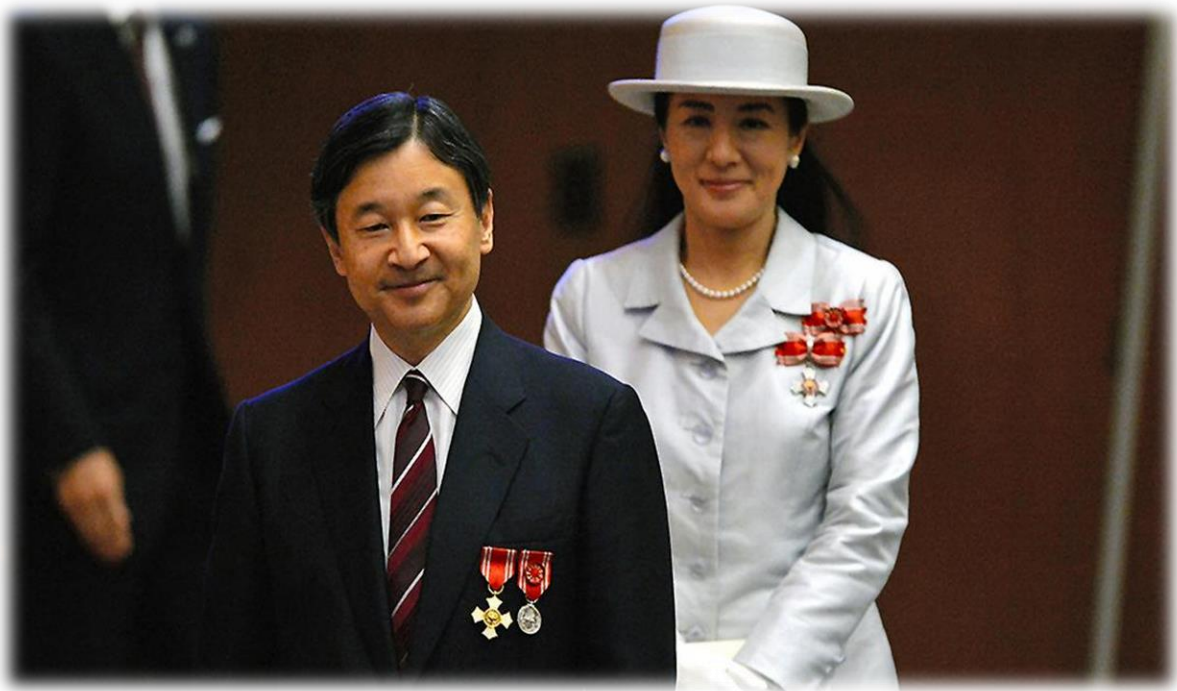
Reconciliation with the rest of Asia

Akihito also had to contend with the legacy of his father, in whose name the Imperial Japanese Army took over half of Asia during World War II. To this day, Japan's conservative elites are reluctant to take responsibility and apologize for the suffering Japan caused during the war.

Although he was technically forbidden from making political statements, Akihito made a point to visit Indonesia and China during his first trips abroad. In China he expressed regret for Japan's aggression and praised the accomplishments of Chinese culture, while reminding Japan of how much they owe their own culture to China.

When Japan's nationalist Prime Minister Shinzo Abe avoided using the word "regret" during a 2015 speech for the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, the emperor gave his own speech and spoke about Japan's "deep self-criticism."

"To put it bluntly, Akihito was more committed to reconciliation with Japan's neighbors than most Japanese prime ministers during the Heisei era," said historian Torsten Weber from the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo.



Akihito and Michiko's successors

Japan's Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako

Akihito and Michiko also visited the Philippines and World War II battlefields between the US and Japan on Pacific islands. Akihito was unable to directly apologize for the war due to law, but he was always able to carefully find words to express regret and prayer for all victims of war.

Continuing Akihito's example

According to experts on Japan's monarchy, Akihito abdicated the throne early due to pressure from Japanese conservatives who say his health is failing and that he is too old. Akihito was said to have been concerned over the legacy of his reign and preserving the image he created for Japan's monarchical institution.

"Akihito wanted to abdicate early in order to transfer his activities untarnished to his son," said expert Kawanishi. In February, the successor to Japan's imperial throne, Crown Prince Naruhito, confirmed that he would continue the work of his parents.

(☺)(☺)(☺)(☺)(☺)

Emperor Akihito **Japan's 'Surprising Pacifist'** **Steps Down After 30 Years**

<https://www.npr.org/2019/04/30/718253308/emperor-akihito-japans-surprising-pacifist-steps-down-after-30-years>



Japan's Emperor Akihito, with Empress Michiko, waves to well-wishers in the central Japanese prefecture of Mie on April 18. Emperor Akihito takes part in a series of rituals ahead of his abdication.

In the years immediately after World War II, at the Peers' School in Tokyo, a Quaker teacher named Elizabeth Vining liked to give English names to her students, all children of the Japanese nobility.

"I was Eric," recalls Masao Oda, one of Vining's former pupils.

His roommate and classmate, a boy named Akihito, was given the name Jimmy. But Akihito pushed back.

"So, he stood up and rejected this name given by Mrs. Vining, 'Jimmy,' " Oda recalls. " 'I'm not a Jimmy, I'm a crown prince,' he said."

Akihito ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne in 1989, succeeding his father, Emperor Hirohito. On Tuesday, he is abdicating and handing over the throne to his son, Crown Prince Naruhito, thus ending the postwar period formally known as Heisei, "achieving peace."

Emperor Akihito was born in 1933, two years after [Japan invaded Manchuria](#) in northern China, a prelude to its role in World War II. Japanese troops fought in the name of Emperor Hirohito. Crown Prince Akihito was expected to grow to become the supreme commander of the nation's military.

"He was educated and trained to be strong and tough," recalls Mototsugu Akashi, a childhood classmate of Akihito. "My impression of Akihito, at that time, was that he was more selfish than kind."

Japanese Emperor Akihito Abdicates Throne; New Crown Prince to Ascend

Japan's defeat in World War II transformed young Akihito into a pacifist, Akashi says.

"That time produced in him strong feelings against war and its chaos. You could call it a hatred of war," he says.

Akashi believes that the young Akihito spoke about the war with his father, the emperor.

On Jan. 1, 1946, Emperor Hirohito [declared he was a mortal](#), not a divine being. The following year, Japan's U.S.-drafted postwar

constitution took away sovereignty from the emperor and gave it to the Japanese people, keeping the monarch as a figurehead but without political power.

The emperor's role in modern Japan is worth a robust discussion, says Takeshi Hara, a political scientist and expert on Japan's imperial system at the [Open University of Japan in Tokyo](#). The problem, he says, is that "even now, people still welcome the emperor like a living god. The emperor and empress try hard to talk to people, but people are not ready to talk to them as human beings. So, the conditions are not yet ripe for discussing what the emperor's role as a symbol of the state should be."

"A surprising sort of democrat"

Akihito, whose official duties have included conferring prizes and meeting visiting heads of state, has often broken with royal tradition. He is the first Japanese emperor to have married a commoner. Empress Michiko, born Michiko Shoda, came from a Roman Catholic family, a small minority in the country. Akihito has said that he wishes to be cremated after his death — a break with centuries-old traditions of burials in imperial mausoleums. And he has [alluded to](#) his own Korean ancestry, to the dismay of Japanese nationalists.

The emperor, who writes short poetry in the ancient Japanese waka form, is a popular figure known for comforting and praying for the victims of earthquakes, tsunamis and other disasters, and for visiting countries invaded by Japan during World War II. Both abroad and at home, he [has expressed deep remorse](#) for Japan's wartime actions.

Akihito's pacifist views are believed to have created simmering, if unspoken, tensions with a government that has tacked to the political right and wants to cast off postwar restraints on its military, government and monarchy.

Shinzo Abe, one of the country's longest-serving prime ministers, has been less willing than previous leaders to show contrition for Japan's role in World War II, angering countries including China and South Korea, which Japan invaded and colonized.

Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party has long pushed to revise the country's U.S.-drafted constitution so that Japan could maintain and use its military, upgrade the emperor to head of state (rather than symbol of the state) and prioritize public order over individual liberties.

Akihito "has in some ways become a surprising sort of democrat, a surprising pacifist, who is not necessarily feeling comfortable with the government of the day," says political scientist Koichi Nakano at Sophia University in Tokyo. "And that sort of mistrust is also mutual."

oooooooooooooooooooo

Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress

<https://www.kunaicho.go.jp/e-about/activity/activity01.html>

I



Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress

On 7 January 1989, upon the demise of Emperor Hirohito (posthumously Emperor Showa), His Majesty Emperor Akihito acceded to the throne as the 125th Emperor of Japan. The Ceremony of Enthronement was held at the Imperial Palace on 12 November 1990. From abroad, representatives of 158 countries, including Monarchs and Heads of State, and of two international organizations attended the ceremony.

As stated in the Constitution of Japan, the Emperor is "the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people" and derives his position from "the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power."

Emperor Akihito was born in Tokyo on 23 December 1933, to the great joy of the entire nation, as the first son of Emperor Showa and Empress Kojun. He has four elder sisters, one younger brother and one younger sister.

His Majesty received his elementary and secondary education at Gakushuin, the then Imperial Household Ministry school which later became a private institution. While he was in the elementary school, he had to move temporarily out of Tokyo with his classmates because of the war. He was still in the mountains of Nikko when the war came to an end in 1945.

In 1952, he entered Gakushuin University's Faculty of Political Science and Economics. In the same year, his Coming-of-Age Ceremony and his Investiture as Crown Prince were held. He thus began to carry out official duties in his capacity as Crown Prince. The next year, he made his first overseas journey to attend the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, and travelled extensively in North America and Europe. He completed his university education as a special student in 1956.

In addition to his formal education, Emperor Akihito received special tutoring from authorities in various areas of learning, such as Japanese History and Constitutional Law.



**Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress.
(1959) at their marriage.**

On 10 April 1959, Crown Prince Akihito married Miss Michiko Shoda, daughter of a distinguished businessman. Dr. Shinzo Koizumi, who supervised the Crown Prince's education for many years, said of this marriage: "The Crown Prince chose her, and so did we." In accordance with the Imperial House Law, the Imperial House Council, headed by the Prime Minister, gave its unanimous consent to the marriage. The whole nation was enchanted by the traditional wedding ceremony and the splendid open horse-carriage procession that followed. It was one of the happiest days in the history of post-war Japan.

Crown Prince Akihito, with warm and devoted support from Crown Princess Michiko, pursued his official duties with renewed vigour, faithfully observing the time-honoured Imperial tradition and, at the same time, opening up new areas of activity befitting the role of the Crown Prince in the modern era.

Following his strong encouragement, the National Sports Games for the Disabled was initiated in 1965, bringing broader opportunities for the disabled to play their full role in society. An annual prize for outstanding work in the care of handicapped children was created with the support of the Crown Princess. The Crown Prince and Crown Princess met all the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers before they departed for their work in developing countries and followed their work with great interest thereafter. A Crown Prince Scholarship was created for student exchange between Japan and Hawaii where descendants of a large number of Japanese emigrants live.

As Crown Prince and Crown Princess, they visited 37 countries in all the regions of the world, in most cases on behalf of the then Emperor and Empress. They generated an enormous amount of goodwill in the countries they visited, as people came to appreciate their unassuming and sincere personalities.

II

Empress Michiko was born in Tokyo on 20 October 1934 as the first daughter of Hidesaburo and Fumiko Shoda. The Shoda family is prominent in both industrial and academic circles, counting among its members two recipients of the Order of Culture, the highest order given to scholars and artists by the Emperor. At the time of her marriage to the Crown Prince, the nation expressed approval and satisfaction on learning of the family's simple and dignified way of life.

Miss Shoda attended Futaba Elementary School. She was obliged to leave the school when she was in the fourth grade, as the ravages of war made living in Tokyo difficult. She returned to Tokyo to graduate from her old school after the war ended. She then attended Seishin

(Sacred Heart) High School and entered the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature in the Faculty of Literature at the University of the Sacred Heart. In her senior year, she was elected, upon nomination by her classmates, president of the student government. Many of her classmates recall that, though very reserved, she won full cooperation from her fellow students and helped to introduce a harmonious spirit into University life. At the ceremony of her graduation in 1957 she was valedictorian.

As Crown Princess, she deepened her understanding of problems existing in society through meetings with leading figures representing various spheres of activity. In her modest and self-effacing manner, she was once heard to say that she, as a member of the Imperial Family, would like to remain a person who follows with concern what is happening in society, keeping the people and their needs close to her heart and constantly praying for their well-being.



The Imperial Family enjoying a moment out of doors in the garden of the Crown Prince's Residence. (1981)

The Crown Prince and Crown Princess established a happy family with their three children, Prince Naruhito, Prince Fumihito and Princess Sayako.

In spite of her busy life, the Crown Princess brought her three children up herself with loving care. She breast-fed all of them, and when the children were of school-age, it was she herself who prepared their lunch-boxes early every morning. Later, she said about her approach to child-raising: "I have consulted the Emperor (then the Crown Prince) on every matter and I am grateful to him for the precious advice he gave me, based on his own experiences, which was most helpful to me."

As the Emperor mentioned at one of his press conferences, the Empress has always loved and respected his relatives, above all his parents. As Crown Princess, her constant visits with the Crown Prince and their

children to Emperor Showa and Empress Kojun gave them much joy. Since Emperor Showa passed away, Empress Michiko, together with Emperor Akihito, continued to visit Empress Kojun almost every weekend, until Empress Kojun passed away on 16 June 2000.

III



(Photo: Imperial Household Agency)



**Imperial Investiture
(Photo: Imperial Household Agency)**



**Ceremony of Presentation of Credentials
(Photo: Imperial Household Agency)**

The Emperor performs those acts in matters of state which are provided for in the Constitution, such as appointing the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, attesting the appointment of Ministers of State and some other high officials, convoking the National Diet, promulgating laws and treaties, awarding honours, attesting the credentials of ambassadors as well as receiving foreign ambassadors. In these matters of state, he acts on the advice and approval of the Cabinet.



The Commemoration Ceremony of the Twentieth Anniversary of His Majesty the Emperor's Accession to the Throne (2009)



Over 30,000 lantern-bearing well-wishers gather at the Palace Plaza for a Grand People's Festival celebrating the 20th anniversary of Emperor Akihito's accession to the throne. The Emperor and Empress wave paper lanterns in response.(2009)

Since the Enthronement in 1989, the Emperor, together with the Empress, has been discharging a wide variety of official duties in relation to his position as the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people. The twentieth Anniversary of the Enthronement of the Emperor was celebrated in 2009 with a number of commemorative ceremonies and colourful events involving people from various walks of life. With their strong sense of duty and constant attention to the real needs of the

people, Their Majesties have brought the Imperial Family much closer to the general public with unfailing dignity.

At the Imperial Palace, Their Majesties host hundreds of ceremonies, audiences, teas, lunches, and dinners all year around. On these occasions, they meet a large number of people from all walks of life, including government officials, local government leaders, businessmen, farmers and fishermen, social and welfare workers, scholars and artists. State Banquets for visiting Heads of State or lunches and audiences for other visiting dignitaries are also held at the Imperial Palace.



Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress in attendance at the Autumn National Athletic Festival in Toyama Prefecture



National Arbour Day in Oita Prefecture.



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko attend the Festival for the Cherished Sea in Kyoto Prefecture.

Their Majesties have visited all 47 prefectures and many of the remote islands of Japan. They make at least three domestic trips every year, attending the National Sports Festival, the National Arbour Day Festival and the Cherished Sea Festival, which are held in different prefectures in rotation. The last two festivals have the theme of promoting forestry and fisheries while protecting the natural environment. On their domestic trips, besides meeting the community leaders, they always visit welfare, cultural or industrial facilities to give encouragement to the local people involved. Especially concerned about welfare, they have visited more than 500 facilities for children, the elderly and the handicapped throughout the country.



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko console sufferers of Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.(1995)

They visit areas struck by major natural disasters, to console the victims and to give support to the rescue workers. In January 1995, they flew to Hyogo Prefecture after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake as soon as local conditions made it possible. On the day of the trip, by plane, by helicopter and by mini-bus, they visited several widely separated places in the disaster area from early in the morning until late in the evening. They always follow the situation in the disaster areas until full recovery is confirmed; for example, in April 2001, they inspected the state of the recovery of the area affected by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995. Following the Great East Japan Earthquake, which struck on March 11, 2011, Their Majesties made visits to evacuation centers and the disaster-affected areas on seven consecutive weeks from March to May, where they offered their sympathies to the people who had been affected by the disaster.

Since the Emperor's enthronement, Their Majesties have so far made official visits to 28 countries, bringing the number of countries they have visited to 51.



Ceremony of the Utaikai Hajime(Imperial New Year's Poetry Reading)held in State Room(Matsu-no-Ma)

Their Majesties compose *waka* (a classical form of poetry dating back to the 8th century Manyo-shu Anthology), an age-old tradition in the Imperial Family. Their Majesties published a collection of their *waka* when they were Crown Prince and Crown Princess, and, in 1997, upon a strong request from people concerned, a collection of the Empress's *waka* of more recent years was published. Every January, the Emperor hosts the traditional New Year's Poetry Reading at the Palace. In this ceremony, ten *waka* out of about 20,000 composed and submitted to the Emperor by ordinary citizens are chanted in the traditional way, together with *waka* composed by Their Majesties and other members of the Imperial Family.



Emperor Akihito harvests rice

Every year, following the example of his father, Emperor Showa, who initiated the practice in 1927, the Emperor himself plants and harvests rice, the traditional main crop in Japan, at the paddy-field in the Palace Grounds.



Empress Michiko feeds mulberry leaves to silkworms at the sericulture centre in the Imperial Palace Grounds

The Empress raises silkworms at the Palace sericulture centre, with the help of several staff-members, feeding them with mulberry leaves, following the precedent set in 1871 by Empress Dowager Shoken, Empress and consort of the great-grand-father of the Emperor. Some of the silk thus produced is used for a revival of old textile material of historical value kept by the Imperial Family at the *Shosoin* Repository in Nara since the 8th century when it was the capital of the country.

On certain days of the year determined by tradition, Their Majesties pay their respects to the Imperial ancestors at the Palace Sanctuary, and pray for the happiness and welfare of the people.

IV





Their Majesties' interests encompass broad areas of learning and culture. They attend annual award ceremonies of the Japan Academy and the Japan Academy of Arts. They often receive scholars and artists including the members of the Academies as well as the recipients of the Order of Culture at the Imperial Palace. They also attend ceremonies for the awarding of important scientific prizes, as well as international scientific conferences held in Japan.



Emperor Akihito conducts research on gobiid fishes.

The Emperor has a keen interest in natural life and its conservation. He encourages research projects on natural life in the grounds of the Imperial estates.

For many years, the Emperor has made a taxonomic study of gobies, small fish found in fresh, brackish and marine waters. As a member of the Ichthyological Society of Japan, he published 28 papers in the society's journal between 1963 and 2003. The Emperor published 32 papers in all. He was one of the contributors to *The Fishes of the Japanese Archipelago* (1st edition in 1984: the first illustrated book of all the fishes in Japanese waters). He served as honorary president of the Second International Conference on Indo-Pacific Fishes in 1985, and presented a paper, "Some Morphological Characters Considered to be Important in Gobiid Phylogeny," which was later included in the conference proceedings.

Despite his heavy official duties, the Emperor published two papers in a joint work in 2000, and became one of the co-writers of "Fishes of Japan with Pictorial Keys to the Species, Second Edition" published in 2000. An English edition was published in 2002.

For his work in this field, he was invited to become a foreign member of the Linnean Society of London in 1980 and was elected as an honorary member of that Society in 1986. He has been an honorary member of the Zoological Society of London since 1992 and of the Research Institute for Natural Science of Argentina since 1997. He is also a research associate of the Australian Museum. In 1998, he became the first recipient of the King Charles the Second Medal, which is awarded by the Royal Society of London to those heads of state who have made outstanding contribution to the advancement of science.

The Emperor has a keen interest in both Japanese and world history. At the request of the editor of Science magazine when it published a special issue on Japan in 1992, he contributed "Early Cultivators of Science in Japan", an essay on the history of early science in Japan after the coming of the Europeans.

Empress Michiko has an extensive interest in art, and is particularly well-read in Japanese classical literature. She has kept up Her interest in children's literature and contributed to that field Herself. *Hajimete no Yamanobori* (My First Mountain), a picture book for which the Empress wrote the story, was published in 1991. Empress Michiko has also made contributions in the field of translation. She has translated 80 poems of Michio Mado, known for his poems for children, and those translations were published in four books: *Dobutsu-tachi* (The Animals) , *Fushigina Poketto* (THE MAGIC POCKET), *Niji* (Rainbow) and *Keshigomu* (Eraser). The two former books were published in the United States as well. On the basis of those poems translated by the Empress, Michio Mado was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Prize for Literature by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in 1994, becoming the first recipient from Asia. For the 26th Congress of the IBBY convened in New Delhi, India, in 1998, the Empress, at the request of IBBY, made a keynote speech which was delivered via video. In response to many requests, the speech was later published in a bilingual book entitled, "*Building Bridges --- Reminiscences of Childhood Readings*." In 2002, at the invitation of IBBY and the city of Basel in Switzerland, the Empress attended the organization's Jubilee Congress in Basel as one of the three patrons and delivered a congratulatory address at its opening ceremony. This was published as a book titled, "*From Basel --- to those who bring books and children together*."

In October 2005, *Ayumi* (Steps), a book compiling Her Majesty's remarks on various occasions, replies at press conferences

and *waka* poems, was published. The book was published bilingually, in Japanese and English.



A family concert, with Crown Prince Akihito playing the cello, Crown Princess Michiko playing the piano, and Prince Naruhito (now the Crown Prince) playing the violin. (1987)



The Imperial Family relaxes in the tennis house at the Akasaka Imperial Palace. (1978)

The Empress is fond of music. She plays the piano, and is a good accompanist to the Emperor, who plays the cello and to Crown Prince Naruhito, who plays the viola and violin. When She finds time, She enjoys playing in a small chamber ensemble with Her musician friends. Every summer, Her Majesty participates in the annual Kusatsu International Summer Music Academy and Festival, practicing ensemble performance by playing to the accompaniment of musicians coming from many parts of the world. The Empress also gives encouragement and support to *Gagaku*, classical court music and dance, often attending the performances by court musicians and dancers, some of whom are descendants of former aristocrats.

Almost every day, the Emperor and Empress take early morning walks in the Palace woods and gardens where they can enjoy the changes of

the seasons and be close to nature which they both love. On weekends they play tennis, their favourite sport, when their schedule permits.

((😊))((😊))((😊))((😊))((😊))

Emperor Emeritus Akihito's Life in Photos

<https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/tradition/g44811087/emperor-akihito-photos/>



Akihito, who abdicated in 2019, is the longest-living Japanese emperor in history.

BY EMILY BURACK PUBLISHED: AUG 20, 2023 8:00 AM EDT



In 2019, Emperor Akihito became the first Japanese emperor to abdicate the Chrysanthemum Throne in over two centuries. He presided over a very transitory time in Japanese royal history—the role of his father, Emperor Hirohito, in World War II has been debated by historians (Japan fought under Hirohito's name), and he helped to change perceptions of the Japanese Imperial Family, and to make them more modern and accessible to the public.

Set to turn 90 this December, Akihito is currently the longest-living Japanese emperor in verifiable history. He was Japan's 125th emperor, reigning from 1989 through 2019, and can trace his lineage back nearly 3,000 years. Here, see photos of Akihito throughout his life—from childhood to present-day.

	<p>1934</p> <p>Prince Akihito was born on December 23, 1933, the eldest son of Emperor Hirohito and Empress Nagako.</p>
	<p>1934</p> <p>A seven-month-old Prince Akihito with his mom, Empress Nagako.</p>



1935

Prince Akihito of Japan, titled prince Tsugu No Miya as a child, leaves Tokyo for Hayama villa.



1937

A portrait of the Crown Prince on his third birthday.



1940

At age 7, Prince Akihito began school at the Gakushūin, Peers' School, which was founded by Emperor Ninko in 1842.



UNDATED

Here, the young prince enters elementary school in Tokyo.



UNDATED

In this photo from the late 1930s or early 1940s, Emperor Hirohito appears with four of his children: Prince Akihito (second from right) is with his sisters Princess Shigeko, Princess Atsuko, and Princess Kazuko.



1940

During World War II, Emperor Hirohito's role in Japan's military decisions, including the invasion of China and bombing of Pearl Harbor, has been debated by historians. After Japan surrendered, Emperor Hirohito renounced his divine status, signed a new constitution drafted by the U.S., and the role of the Imperial Family greatly changed.



1946

Prince Akihito pictured as a student at Peers' School in Tokyo.



1946

The Crown Prince rides his bike on the grounds of the Imperial Palace.



1948

Prince Akihito and Emperor Hirohito are reading the Pacific edition of the Stars and Stripes, published in Tokyo. Per the original caption, "The Crown Prince is being trained to rule as a popular figure and as a symbol of the gradual development of democratic government in Japan."



1952

Crown Prince Akihito, at age 18, wears the "Grand Order of the Chrysanthemum," Japan's highest medal of honor. On November 10, 1952, Akihito was proclaimed the official heir to the throne.



1952

Here, Akihito is in ceremonial robes for his formal investiture as Crown Prince at the Tokyo Imperial Palace.



1953

On his first major overseas trip, Crown Prince Akihito represented Japan at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. He arrived in Southampton, England, here on April 29, 1953.



Here, Prince Akihito poses in London ahead of Queen Elizabeth's coronation. Decades later, his son Prince Akishino and daughter-in-law Princess Kiko attended King Charles's coronation.



1953

After England, he visited Rome, taking in the Colosseum.



He also went to New York, where he attended a double header between the New York Yankees and the St. Louis Browns at Yankee stadium in this photo. Per the original caption, "The Prince is shown before the game, as he was given a ball by Casey Stengel, the Yankee's Manager."



1955

According to the Imperial Household's official site, in the 50s, Akihito "received special tutoring from authorities in various areas of learning, such as Japanese History and Constitutional Law."



In 1958, he announced his engagement to Michiko Shōda, the first commoner to marry into the Imperial Family.



1958

Akihito and Michiko met playing tennis in Karuizawa, and their romance was called a "love match." According to the New York Times, "Their romance... launched a craze for the sport, which is still the Prince's favorite recreation."



1959

Akihito and Michiko married in April 1959.



1959

Another photograph from their wedding. According to CNN, "On April 10, 1959, more than half a million people lined the parade route, while an estimated 15 million tuned in to watch the wedding live."



1959

Shortly after their wedding, the newlyweds visited the Ise shrine, dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu.



A Japanese stamp commemorating the imperial wedding, 1959



1960

Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko welcomed their first child, Prince Naruhito, in February 1960. They're pictured here with their newborn at the Imperial Palace.



1963

Akihito with his dog, Dingo, on the grounds of Togu Palace.



1971

A family portrait, featuring Crown Prince Akihito (far left), and his three children Prince Akishino (second from left), Prince Naruhito (third from left), and Princess Sayako (second from right).



1973

Prince Fumihito, the current Crown Prince (he's set to succeed his older brother), playing Go with his parents Akihito and Michiko.



1975

Akihito and Michiko in Okinawa during summer 1975.



1981

Akihito and his family lived at Togu Palace. Though the Imperial Family remained distant from the public under his father, per the Times, Akihito "compared the role of Japanese royalty to a robot and said he wanted to bring the imperial family 'closer to the people.'"



1983

The Crown Prince and Princess pictured at Akasaka Detached Imperial Palace, getting ready to welcome President Ronald Reagan to Japan.



Princess Diana and Prince Charles visited Japan in 1986, and while there, Diana chatted with Akihito at a banquet at the British Embassy in Toyko.



1987

Akihito has always loved tennis. Here, he plays during a tennis match at Vice President George Bush's residence, during an official visit to the U.S.



1989

On January 7, 1989, Prince Akihito immediately ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne after the death of his father, 87-year old Emperor Hirohito. He became the 125th Emperor in a tradition which tradition dates back some 2,650 years.



1989

His reign was called the Heisei (平成) era, or "achieving peace."



1990

Emperor Akihito, pictured in formal imperial court attire, for his enthronement ceremony.



1990

He was enthroned on November 12, 1990 at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.



1990

After his enthronement, the Daijō-sai, a religious service marking the consecration of the emperor, was held.



A formal portrait of the new Emperor and Empress.
According to Japanese custom, they will both be
posthumously renamed—Akihito will be known Emperor
Heisei.



1991

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko wave to well-wishers during a New Year's celebration at the Imperial Palace.



1993

The Japanese Imperial family on vacation in Hayama, Japan. From left to right, in this photo: Prince Akishino, Emperor Akihito, Empress Michiko, and Crown Prince Naruhito.



1994 Emperor Akihito visited the U.S. in 1994; here, he speaks at the White House. During remarks, he said, "I sincerely hope that this visit helps our two peoples recognize anew the bonds forged by our forefathers between our two countries and consolidate these

bonds further."



At the 1998 Winter Olympic in Nagano, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko attended the opening ceremony at Minami Nagano stadium.



1998

Emperor Akihito speaks with Queen Elizabeth II during a state visit to the United Kingdom

1998



During his visit to the UK, he met Dr. Stafanni, who works on the study of the goby fish. Throughout his life, Akihito has been passionate about researching goby fish, and as of 2023, he's published 36 papers, and has discovered 10 new species. One goby fish is even named after him.



2003

The Imperial couple strolls at a lavender farm in Nakafurano, Hokkaido Prefecture.



2005

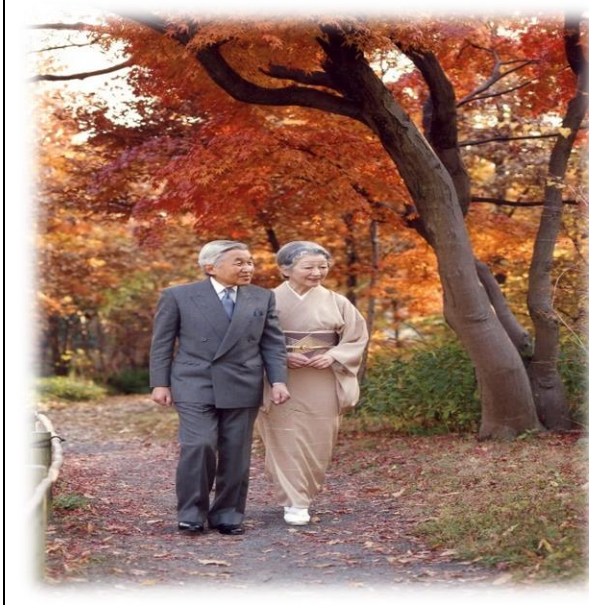
Ahead of trips abroad, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko typically held press conferences. Here, per the original caption, Akihito "shares a light moment with Empress Michiko as they reminisce about past trips"



In 2005, Akihito's only daughter, Princess Sayako, decided to marry Yoshiaki Kuroda. Because of this, she had to leave the Imperial Family. Here, Sayako and her parents perform a traditional Choken-no-Gi ceremony, the Princess's last rite as a member of the Imperial family.



A portrait of the Imperial Family was released for the New Year in **2005**: Emperor Akihito (second from right) and Empress Michiko pose with Crown Prince Naruhito (second from left) and Crown Princess Masako. Behind Akihito stands his other son, Prince Akishino, and Akishino's wife Princess Kiko. His granddaughters Princess Mako, Princess Aiko, and Princess Kako are all pictured, too.



2007

Akihito and Michiko admire the autumnal leaves as they take a stroll in the East Gardens of the Imperial Palace.



2009

Each year, Akihito attends the opening ceremony of the Ordinary Diet session, where he delivers a speech.



2011

Five days after the Tohoku Earthquake and tsunami, Akihito appeared on television in an unprecedented address. "I believe it extremely important for us all to share with the victims as much as possible, in whatever way we can, their hardship in the coming days," he said.

A month later, he and Michiko traveled to destroyed areas to meet with survivors a month later. "I have not seen survivors smiling that way for more than a month and a half. That's how moved everyone was. The older people were crying," Jin Sato, the mayor of Minamisanriku, told reporters.

In this photo, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko pay their respect as they tour a damaged fishing port in Otsu, Kitaibaraki.



In 2012, Emperor Akihito had a heart bypass operation, which went smoothly, according to the University of Tokyo Hospital doctors. It was not his first major surgery: In 2003, he underwent surgery for prostate cancer.



In 2016, Akihito hinted at his intent to abdicate, saying in a speech, "As I am now more than 80 years old and there are times when I feel various constraints such as in my physical fitness, in the last few years I have started to reflect on my years as the Emperor, and contemplate on my role and my duties as the Emperor in the days to come." In 2017, a law was passed allowing him to retire, and his abdication was set for April 30, 2019.



2018

Akihito delivers a speech during a press conference on his birthday at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.



2019

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko walk on the grounds of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.



2019

The official abdication ceremony took place at the Imperial Palace on April 30, 2019. Akihito's day began with a private Shinto ceremony.



2019

During the "Taiirei Seiden no gi" abdication ceremony, Akihito said he "wished Japan and the world peace and happiness."

He added, "I sincerely wish, together with the empress, that the Reiwa era which begins tomorrow will be a stable and fruitful one. I pray, with all my heart, for peace and happiness for all the people in Japan and around the world."



2019

After abdication, he became known as Emperor Emeritus. His son, Prince Naruhito, became Emperor Naruhito, starting the Reiwa era.



2020

Akihito waves at a New Year's greeting ceremony at the Imperial Palace. He suffered a temporary cerebral anaemia in 2020.



2023

In their first trip outside Tokyo in three years, Akihito and Michiko took the train to Kyoto and Nara prefectures.

Issue

Akihito and Michiko have two sons and a daughter.

Name	Birth	Marriage		Children
		Date	Spouse	
Naruhito, Emperor of Japan (Naruhito, Prince Hiro)	23 February 1960 (age 65)	9 June 1993	Masako Owada	Aiko, Princess Toshi
Fumihito, Crown Prince of Japan (Fumihito, Prince Aya)	30 November 1965 (age 59)	29 June 1990	Kiko Kawashima	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mako Komuro • Princess Kako • Prince Hisahito
Sayako Kuroda (Sayako, Princess Nori)	18 April 1969 (age 55)	15 November 2005	Yoshiki Kuroda	None

Overseas Visits

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akihito>

The following tables include official visits jointly made by the Emperor and Empress from 1991 to 2017. Although Empress Michiko has made two official visits on her own, in 2002 (to Switzerland) and 2014 (to Belgium), they did not include the Emperor and are not included in this list.

1990s

Dates	Location(s)	Details
26 September – 6 October 1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ThailandMalaysiaIndonesia	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia"
23–28 October 1992	China	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of China"
6–9 August 1993	Belgium	Attended the funeral of King Baudouin of Belgium. ^[72]
3–19 September 1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ItalyVatican CityBelgiumGermany	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of Italy, Belgium and Germany"
10–26 June 1994	United States	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of the United States"
2–14 October 1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none">FranceSpain	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of France and Spain"
30 May – 13 June 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none">BrazilArgentina	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of Brazil and Argentina"
23 May – 5 June 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none">United KingdomDenmark	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of the United Kingdom and Denmark"

2000s



The Emperor and Empress bowing their heads for a moment of silence at the [National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific](#) in [Honolulu, Hawaii](#), 2009

Dates	Location(s)	Details
20 May – 1 June 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Netherlands Sweden 	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of the Netherlands and Sweden"
6–20 July 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Czech Republic Poland Hungary 	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary"
7–14 May 2005	Norway	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of Norway"
27–28 June 2005	United States	Commemorations of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.
8–15 June 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singapore Thailand 	Commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Singapore; attended the 60th anniversary celebrations of the accession to the throne of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand.
21–30 May 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden Estonia Latvia Lithuania United Kingdom 	Invited by Sweden and the United Kingdom to mark the 300th birth anniversary of Carl von Linné as an honorary member of the Linnean Society ; invited by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to conduct a state visit.
3–14 July 2009	Canada	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of Canada"
15–17 July 2009	United States	Visited Hawaii to mark the 50th anniversary of the Crown Prince Akihito Scholarship Foundation. ^[73]

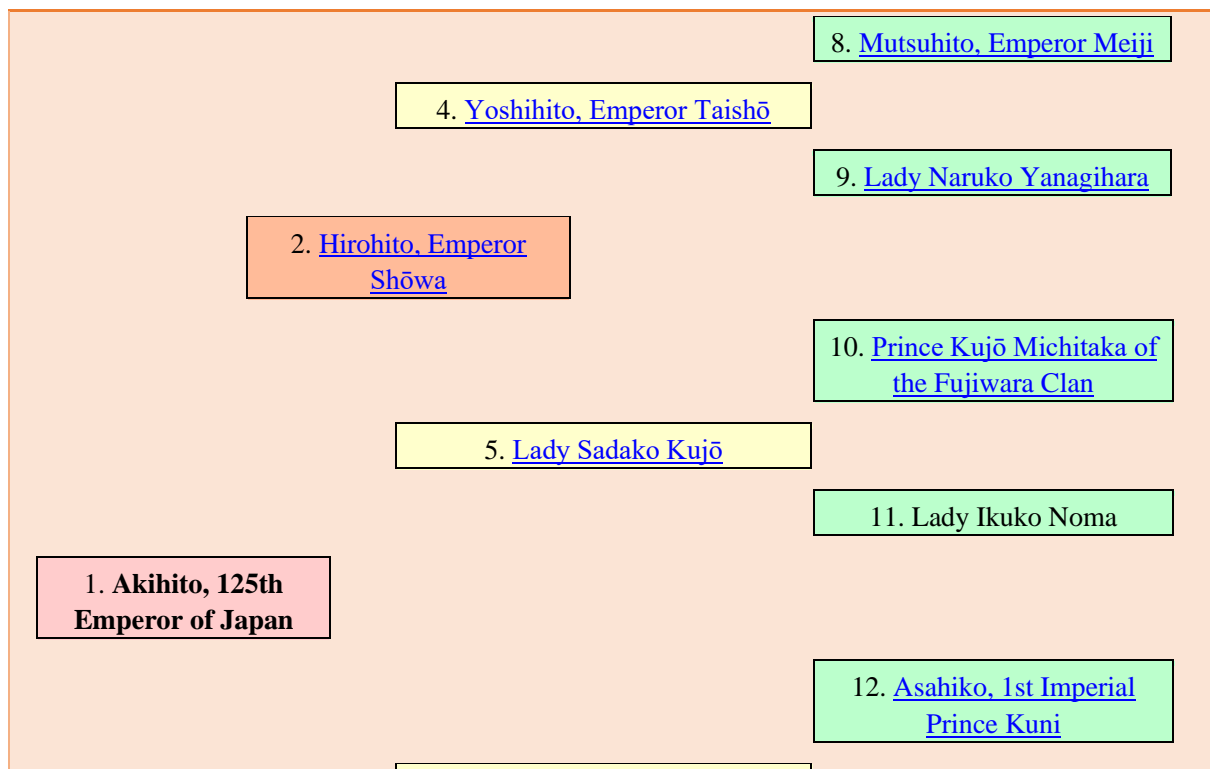
2010s



The Emperor participating in a ceremonial welcome with President [Benigno Aquino III](#) of the Philippines, 2016

Dates	Location(s)	Details
16–20 May 2012	United Kingdom	Attended a luncheon hosted by Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee . ^[74]
30 November – 6 December 2013	India	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of India"
8–9 April 2015	Palau	Commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.
26–30 January 2016	Philippines	"To foster friendly relations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations at the invitation of the Philippines"
28 February – 6 March 2017	Vietnam	"To foster friendly relations at the invitation of Vietnam"
5–6 March 2017	Thailand	Met with King Vajiralongkorn and paid respect to the remains of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej . ^{[75][76]}

Ancestry



15. Lady Sumako Yamazaki

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_honours_of_the_Japanese_imperial_family_by_country

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akihito>

Akihito

- 明仁



Akihito in 2024

Emperor of Japan

Reign 7 January 1989 – 30 April 2019

Enthronement 12 November 1990

Predecessor [Shōwa](#)

Successor [Naruhito](#)

Born Akihito, Prince Tsugu
([繼宮明仁親王](#))
23 December 1933 (age 91)
[Tokyo Imperial Palace](#), [Empire of Japan](#)

Spouse [Michiko Shōda](#)

(m. 1959)

Issue

- [Naruhito, Emperor of Japan](#)
- [Fumihito, Crown Prince of Japan](#)
- [Sayako Kuroda](#)

Era name and dates

[Heisei](#): 8 January 1989 – 30 April 2019

House [Imperial House of Japan](#)

Father [Emperor Shōwa](#)

Mother [Princess Nagako Kuni](#)

Religion [Shinto](#)

Signature 明
仁

Akihito^[a] (born 23 December 1933) is a member of the [Imperial House of Japan](#) who reigned as the 125th [emperor of Japan](#) from 1989 until [his abdication](#) in 2019. The era of his rule was named the [Heisei era](#), Heisei being an expression of achieving peace worldwide.

Born in 1933, Akihito is the fifth child and first son of [Emperor Shōwa](#) and [Empress Kōjun](#). During the [Second World War](#), he moved out of Tokyo with his classmates and remained in [Nikkō](#) until 1945. In 1952, his Coming-of-Age ceremony and investiture as [crown prince](#) were held, and he began to undertake official duties in his capacity as crown prince. The next year, he made his first journey overseas and represented Japan at the [coronation of Elizabeth II](#) in London. He completed his university education in 1956. In April 1959, he married [Michiko Shōda](#), a commoner; it was the first imperial wedding to be televised in Japan, drawing about 15 million viewers. The couple has three children: [Naruhito](#), [Fumihito](#), and [Sayako](#).

Akihito succeeded to the [Chrysanthemum Throne](#) and became emperor upon [his father's death](#) in 1989, with an [enthronement ceremony](#) in 1990. He made efforts to bring the imperial family closer to the Japanese people, and made official visits to all forty-seven [prefectures of Japan](#) and to many of the remote [islands of Japan](#). He has a keen interest in natural life and conservation, as well as Japanese and world history. Akihito [abdicated in 2019](#), citing his advanced age and declining health, and assumed the title [Emperor Emeritus](#) (上皇, *Jōkō*, lit. 'Retired Emperor'). He was succeeded by his eldest son, Naruhito, whose era is named [Reiwa](#) (令和). At age 91, Akihito is the longest-lived verifiable Japanese emperor in recorded history. During his reign, 17 prime ministers served in 25 terms, beginning with [Noboru Takeshita](#) and ending with [Shinzo Abe](#). He is the oldest living member of the Imperial House of Japan, following the death of [Yuriko, Princess Mikasa](#) on 15 November 2024.

(😊)@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@(😊)

ISBN 978-81-982954-6-0

